Comox Strathcona Waste Management

Minutes

REGIONAL SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday, February 15, 2024, via Zoom commencing at 12:34 pm

PRESENT:

W. Cole-Hamilton	Co-Chair, RSWAC
D. Baar	Campbell River
D. Birtch	Campbell River
M. E. Walling	Campbell River
W. Semmelink	Comox
J. Best	Cortes Island
K. Lovely	Cumberland
R. Rowe	CVRD Area B
R. Telegus	Denman Island
K. Lukinuk	Hornby Island
M. Jeffs	Sayward
L. Bryan	BCWMA
D. Hadfield, Director of Operations	City of Campbell River
C. Thompson, Manager of Solid Waste Services	City of Courtenay
C. Perry, Engineering Manager	Town of Comox
R. Crisfield, Manager of Operations	Village of Cumberland
M. Tatchell, Chief Administrative Officer	Village of Tahsis
K. Hamilton	Tavola Group
L. Eason, CSWM Community Educator	Consultant
M. Rutten, General Manager of Engineering Services	CVRD
V. Schau, Senior Manager of CSWM Services	CVRD
S. Willie, Manager of Solid Waste Planning & Policy Development	CVRD
M. Briggs, Branch Assistant – Engineering Services	CVRD
B. Meagher, Information Centre Assistant	CVRD

ITEMS:

Review of Agenda and Minutes

Co-Chair W. Cole-Hamilton acknowledged that the meeting is being hosted on the traditional unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, and the Comox Strathcona Waste Management (CSWM) service area is located in the Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Nuu-chah-nulth territories.

The committee reviewed the minutes of the December 14, 2023 Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee (RSWAC) meeting and no errors or omissions were noted. The advisory committee adopted the February 15, 2024 meeting agenda.

A new advisory committee member, K. Lovely, was introduced to the committee.

Presentation of Draft Engagement Plan for Step 3, 2024

K. Hamilton presented on the Step 3 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) public consultation process. Provided an overview of the provincial requirements for a SWMP consultation and level of engagement planned by the CVRD, as well as the four steps of the SWMP process. Detailed the key topics and level of engagement for Step 3, as well as objectives of SWMP communications and consultation, with a new objective added for Step 3: "Clearly outline the challenges and opportunities facing the solid waste management system and strategies explored to address them." Summarized the stages of Step 3, including early targeted engagement (municipalities, neighbouring regional districts, meetings with key sectors, in-person engagement with rural and remote communities), refine strategies for evaluation, and broad public engagement (online survey, meetings with sectors affected by refined strategies, in-person engagement across service area). Staff have refined the list of stakeholders based on committee feedback, and will be consulting with First Nations in a separate engagement process. Summarized techniques used for communications and engagement for awareness-raising and collecting input. The CVRD will be hosting open houses at the landfill and organics facility. Timing for Step 3 consultation includes launch in May 2024, early engagement throughout rest of year and broad engagement next year, with a report summarizing engagement shared with the committee in spring 2025. Engagement plan to be distributed to advisory committee after meeting for committee feedback. Requested comments by Friday, February 23.

Advisory comments:

- M. Tatchell – For remote communities, staff may be unavailable or on vacation during summer. Zeballos only has two employees. Some facilities may be closed, so should reach out as soon as possible. Speaking specifically about public engagement.
    - Aiming to reach out to municipal councils in May or June. Will lean on staff less for public engagement, but will reach out and coordinate with staff at each location before the summer.
- R. Telegas – The Denman Island paper, the Grapevine, is undergoing some changes. Now there is a new community paper called the Barnacle. Staff should check the readership of various papers on Denman and consider advertising in other papers.

    - Was Grapevine typically the channel for advertising, and there would be greater reach if considering other papers?
    - Grapevine is experiencing issues with advertisers pulling out, so may not be viable in future.
- K. Lukinuk – Hornby has Tribune paper distributed to all properties. Best time for public engagement for Hornby is July and August since most that's when there are the most people on the island.
- L. Bryan – Had spoken with CVRD previously about not being able to engage earlier with haulers. Have current contacts for haulers and will share up-to-date info.
- S. Willie – Working with M. Stewart to fill in gaps in engagement for marginalized or low-income communities in SRD and Campbell River area.

Review of Feedback from Last Meeting and Incorporation into Today

S. Willie summarized the topics discussed at previous meetings and to be discussed today, including identified strategies for rural communities, access to recycling and for remote communities, and share sheds.

Advisory comments:

- L. Eason – Letter to editor published in Courtenay about multi-family building getting removed from City system and now spending more on private, so should be added to priority list.
- R. Telegus – Multi-family have option to hire private haulers and recyclables are not documented in that case. Multi-family dwellings should be included in provincial program. Nanaimo implemented a bylaw requiring all multi-family and ICI waste falls under provincial program, so should follow their example.
    - Future meeting will discuss policy tools, and will incorporate into meeting.

Service Levels and Accessibility

S. Willie provided an overview of the curbside services offered in the CVRD using 2023 costs, as well as the east coast of the SRD due to gaps in service in that area. Listed estimated kg/household of materials handled through curbside, with data missing for Cortes since waste is dropped off at transfer station where there isn't a scale. SRD received letter from RecycleBC that Cortes has lowest participation for recycling curbside across province (partly due to using the depot instead), which has led to a reduction in compensation from RecycleBC. Noted Cumberland has lower garbage waste, which may be due to higher participation in organics program or driving to landfill instead. Listed communities without organized curbside service or free waste drop-off, which includes most of the electoral areas, and the landfills and depots where their garbage and recycling is usually dropped off if they don't use a private hauler. Summarized number of visitors and average tonnage to Comox Valley and

Campbell River waste management centres, as well as tonnage of recycling to waste management centres and Oyster River drop-off.

Provided a brief history of rural waste collection in the electoral areas, noting three private haulers and the previously proposed rural collection services. In 2020 consultation, broke up engagement into various regions to determine interest amongst different communities and to create a service focused on those that want the service. Noted timing coincided with closure of unstaffed depots at Courtenay Country Market and Canex, which were closed due to high level of contamination and costs. Shared statistics from survey for various communities, showing breakdown of how household garbage and recycling were handled in rural areas and interest in curbside pick-up. Noted lower uptake of recycling where optional, convenience of self-hauling for those living near landfill, use of unstaffed depots if nearby, preference for more customized service, perceived impracticality of rural service, higher support for service from those with private haulers, etc. Received 74 per cent favourable survey responses, but over 10 per cent of forms received in Alternate Approval Process (AAP) so did not go forward. Mixed response from community following result of AAP.

Summarized feedback received during Step 1 of SWMP process, including willingness to recycle, satisfaction with recycling depots, willingness to divert waste, etc. Noted barriers to diversion, such as costs, vehicle access, wildlife concerns, lack of facilities or services, accessibility issues and storage issues. Compared examples from Denman and Hornby to show impact of self-haul versus curbside collection, with waste consolidated into fewer loads from Hornby while Denman residents not utilizing curbside self-haul to landfill. Discussed pressure on facilities from rising use.

Discussed alternative options. Expanded depot network seems counterintuitive after closing unmanned depots, but didn't include looking at turning depots into staffed depots with RecycleBC funding. Could potentially include staffed depots in Merville, Union Bay and Fanny Bay, with options for expanding the Oyster River depot. Staff have received approval from RecycleBC for Quadra Island depot. Also considering options for depot in south Campbell River/north Area D.

Shared statistics of recycling from RecycleBC programs with material collected by kilogram per service or depot. Dramatic spike in recycling collection for Comox Valley and Campbell River after closure of unmanned depots. Significant amount of material collected at Oyster River depot but entirely funded by CSWM, so looking to partner with RecycleBC to add as catchment area.

Shared details on rural services/depots including costs/revenues, staffing, operating hours, services offered, etc. Looked at Hornby Island and Cortes Island, and

compared unstaffed recycling drop-off at Oyster River and Quadra Island. Explained the Unified Transportation Model, which shares costs across the CSWM service area as waste is centralized at the Comox Valley Waste Management Centre (CVWMC).

Sought input from the committee on statements of agreement, as well as how this could be applied to recycling collection, including:

- We collectively fund the end of life management of waste in our regional landfill in Cumberland.
- We will collectively fund the transfer of waste and recyclable to the regional landfill.
- We will all be responsible for the disposal (tip fee) cost of the waste that we individually generation, or collectively as a municipality or service area.

Shared comparable examples of services at depot, including costs per household and per tonne. Looked at funding impacts for various levels of service. Curbside service, if contracted out, would include all costs in collection fee, while if operated by CSWM staff, would require purchase of trucks and/or bins. Depots would require additional investment and expenses, and would increase the cost of the unified transportation agreements.

Questions for the committee:

1. What is convenient and accessible, is it curbside, is it a depot?
2. If curbside is not selected as a preference, who should fund the expansion of the waste transfer system?
3. Curbside only includes the collection of typical blue box recycling, is that the baseline for a depot?
4. If there is a depot built, subscription curbside will still be available, how will that impact use?

Advisory comments:

- R. Telegus – Denman Island are 8 bags for $20, with weekly collection in the summer.
- M. Tatchell – Tahsis has weekly curbside garbage pickup for residential and business.
- K. Lovely – Is the weight of waste from each community a total weight per household? Is it just household or ICI?
    - It is kg/household. Just have household data at this time. ICI based on collection data at landfill, with average per capita likely closer to 512kg.
- R. Telegus – Where does the AAP process come from? Is it a regional district bylaw or provincial process?
    - Provincial. One of the ways to achieve electoral assent under the *Local Government Act*. During an AAP process, once you have 10 per cent of

people in opposition, you can either abandon issue or go to referendum. Included as option due to expensive nature of referendum.

- M. Tatchell – Can you please reiterate what you plan to do with rest of SRD? Will we not cover service levels currently in places? Should be included to be fair to residents in the areas.
    - 20 per cent population gap. Look at cost of depots and performance metrics for depots. Conversation will continue to apply to west island, but for the purposes of today, broadly looking at accessibility, noting different facilities, etc. Can cover service levels for west island in future. In terms of expansion and cost implications, west coast is included in budget for landfill closures and expansion of services. Gap in east coast is not included in financial planning.
- J. Best – Why was AAP process used if it just gives voice to opposition? Was it to save costs? Why not just go forward with service?
    - Can't legally create service without approval. CVRD was coordinating multiple AAPs to save costs, and other AAPs received far less responses. Did not expect to receive such high opposition going into process.
- D. Baar - Recycling is revenue generating. How do the revenues per tonne look compared to costs?
    - We recover roughly about $500k per year in recycling.
- K. Lukinuk – Concerned about costs for Hornby being higher. Pay about double for waste services compared to Denman. Should Hornby be considered for curbside collection like Denman to reduce costs and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission? Are there alternatives to reduce costs? Should be similar to Denman. Cars may be idling if lines, and some seniors have difficulty using depot. Would the CVRD be willing to trial and support?
    - If not reducing level of service at depot and just adding garbage collection, don't expect costs to go down.
    - Would expect costs reduced from less roll-off bins shipped from depot. Also see less people travelling to landfill.
    - Cortes Island delivers to transfer station, but then sent to Campbell River in roll-off bins, so similar model would not see reduction in number of roll-off bins. If offered garbage with no recycling, would that decrease or improve interest in recycling?
    - Year-round residents will recycle, but seasonal residents can't be bothered to separate recycling from garbage. Should look at just garbage collection first without dropping off at depot.
    - Can explore and discuss further, but not sure it will have the desired results.
    - Stark difference between service levels on Denman and Hornby. Hornby has most exhaustive list of diverted material in CSWM compared to

Denman just having basic RecycleBC program. Depot staff oversees all recycling diversion. Won't see much cost difference without reduction in service.
    - No depot staff involved with garbage, so only looking at garbage stream.
- D. Baar – Accessibility acceptance level may also depend on personal mobility situations for aging population and others.

- M. Rutten – Curbside is very convenient in a general sense. Depots do work well in certain communities.
- J. Best – Convenience of curbside can't be overstated. Should determine who gets curbside primarily based on what's feasible for density of community. Can also consider options to reduce GHG emissions.
    - For Cortes where there is not optimal uptake of curbside service, should that be cautioned against? Could use previous Hornby example, where curbside would be added where there is already a well-used depot.
    - Don't see why people on Cortes wouldn't take advantage of curbside if offered. Also cautionary tale with people going to depot anyway. Curbside should be considered the norm, but consider culture that favours an alternative or does not make sense for density.
- M. Jeffs – Supportive of curbside.
- R. Crisfield – Density is key factor when considering curbside service. Looking at rural areas near Courtenay and Comox boundaries, curbside would reduce trips from residents to landfill, but also number of trips from collection companies with 3-4 different companies operating in area. Higher density areas should be targeted for curbside. Not one-size-fits-all scenario, with mixed service maybe working better on rural islands.
- D. Baar – We have necessary data to set threshold for where curbside would be practical.
    - RecycleBC does have density data available and staff did evaluate areas against their criteria to see what areas could be considered for service. Led to emphasis on areas along highways, while isolated areas like Forbidden Plateau or Mount Washington or area near the landfill had more opposition.
- R. Rowe – Supportive of curbside. Recommend shifting perspective in educational promotion to expand term of cost to not just look at it from financial perspective but also include other costs like carbon emissions. Will allow for better understanding of long-term consequences and provide more holistic approach.
    - Working with contractor on emissions inventory and will highlight in addendum of report. Will try to include in public engagement.
- M. E. Walling – Expanding the conversation to include other costs like GHG emissions for individual transportation of recycling is a good idea. Expanding the

depot program could also be helpful. The challenge is changing an existing pattern of behaviour.

- W. Semmelink – Supports recycling collection being mandated for multi-family and strata and those cut out of service, and to incorporate organics for higher density areas. Higher charge for garbage, but lower costs for organic waste and recyclables to encourage greater diversion. Could we adopt a higher tip fee for residents with a curbside program?
- S.Willie – Potential for coordinating with local stakeholders to provide services, such as bins at community halls run by non-profit organizations.
- M. E. Walling – Seeing people moving from urban areas expecting a higher level of service.
- R. Rowe – Any thought of adding glass to curbside collection with move to automated?
    - Would have to check with municipality. RecycleBC requires it to be separated out which leads to additional costs. Usually requires separate bin for curbside and separate compartment in collection vehicle.
    - Safety issue with glass breaking?
    - Yes, since glass breaks and is also more likely to contaminate other streams. Less revenue from glass.

Break

The advisory committee broke for recess at 2:37pm and resumed its session at 2:49pm.

Service Levels and Accessibility (Continued)

S. Willie gave an overview of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program diversion with all collection partners. Recycling programs go beyond typical blue-box recycling and residents have various access to these services. Province mandates EPR programs be free and reasonable, and each EPR program establishes their own accessibility. Staff are aiming to include a statement on level of accessibility for EPR programs. Ministry is reviewing policy, which was initially based around drive time.

EPR groups products based on level of usage (daily, weekly, yearly, less than yearly), size (small, medium, large), and hazardousness (non-hazardous, hazardous). Statistics Canada created categories for communities called Index of Remoteness, which considers distance from population centres and size of population centres. All of CVRD, Campbell River and SRD electoral areas B, C, D are accessible; SRD Area A, Gold River, and Sayward considered less accessible; and Zeballos and Tahsis considered remote. Index does not consider remoteness within electoral areas, like Denman or Hornby. Accessibility framework suggests single- & multi-family pickup for blue-box recycling products at weekly/bi-weekly for accessible communities, bi-weekly for less accessible, and monthly for remote areas. Population target

decreases from 95 per cent for accessible to 50 per cent for remote communities. Suggests that direct pick-up should be offered 1-4 times per year for all items except beverage containers. For permanent collection facilities, have recommended drive time and hours for depots targeting a minimum percent of the population. Accessible communities are recommended as having curbside for 90 per cent of population for packaging and paper products. Beverage containers and EPR products have lower threshold. Temporary collection facilities and events, such as community events to collect recyclables in remote communities, aren't considered feasible for most recycling, but recommended for other EPR products 1-4 times a year and that events be held together.

Question for the committee:

1. Does it align with our expectation of service levels for communities?
2. How do we account for island communities that are not provided their own Index of Remoteness value?
3. How do we think this will impact our service?

Advisory comments:

- M. E. Walling – Lots of core services not offered north of Nanaimo. Index of Remoteness attempts to propose urban mindset on our diverse grouping of communities with varying challenges.
    - Recognize that we need to address the individuality of each community and determine appropriate level of convenience.
- M. Tatchell – Tahsis collects Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and electronics.
- R. Telegus – On Denman would welcome community event for collection of HHW.
- M. Tatchell – Gold River, Zeballos, and Tahsis currently collect, pallet up, and ship out electronic waste. Move to event would see reduction in service. If Stats Canada came up with level of remoteness, will vary from province to province. Transportation between islands and along logging roads should be considered.
    - Index of Remoteness does not necessarily align with the CSWM's objectives.
- J. Best – Each program only needs to meet a certain percentage of service. Does CSWM have access to whether CSWM services are meeting the criteria for EPR programs?
    - Staff can calculate or hire consultant, but information not readily available.
    - Should reach out to ministry for more information. Would be helpful to know if the programs are meeting the standards.
    - Ministry will be looking at some communities as case studies, but may not include CSWM. Do have option to create own accessibility standards as part of SWMP and can fund based on what is agreed as reasonable level of service. Will require getting EPR programs on board and may involve subsidizing program.

- S. Willie – If accessibility framework was enforced, would require significant increase in number of depots.
- R. Rowe – For tire stewardship program, had contractor go around picking up tires and dropping off at single location. Ensured material brought to one location. Not sure if that applies to other EPR programs.
    - Each program has their own standards. Tires tend to accumulate and be stockpiled. For lights, may come out to commercial businesses when replacing multiple light fixtures. Companies for fire safety may have individual pickup for smoke alarms.

Free Stores, Share Sheds, Swap Shop

V. Schau notified the advisory that a technical memo on the topic would be distributed to the advisory committee after the meeting. Step 2 of the SWMP emphasized the first 7 Rs, and free stores were discussed at September CSWM Board. Explained what free stores and share/swap sheds are, where individuals can donate items and take items for free. Goal is to divert items from landfill and encourage reuse and sustainability, and tend to fit with rural community mindset and lower level of access, as well as areas with lower income. Shared information on existing free stores in CSWM service area, detailing their ownership, funding, insurance, and staffing. Includes free stores on Denman, Hornby, Cortes, Tahsis, and Sayward, with Gold River having closed theirs down since COVID-19.

Staff are looking at potential for free stores in urban areas, and investigated benefits and drawbacks. Want to avoid competing with existing non-profit groups and thrift stores. Will share list of 52 stores that currently serve urban areas in CSWM service area in technical memo. CSWM does organize events to improve diversion, such as pop-up clothing swaps, repair cafes and educational workshops. Potential for free stores to become dumping grounds and require oversight to manage, and also requires additional costs to run and build. Shared examples of how other jurisdictions handle free stores and events, including Cariboo Regional District, qathet Regional District, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Capital Regional District, Regional District of Nanaimo, District of Squamish and City of Vancouver. Important to consider existing services, convenience, minimizing operating costs, customer and staff safety, supporting reuse organizations and logistics. Proposed free store could accept furniture, art, household times, tools, unused building materials, and electronics, but would exclude textiles, carpets, non-functioning EPR items, HHW, and used building materials. Options include establishing pilot for non-profit at CVWMC with term staffing, a pop-up event with non-profit at CVWMC with volunteers/staff, or update CVWMC/Campbell River Waste Management Centre master plans as part of SWMP. Next steps include full report to advisory committee for feedback by February 22 with revised report to March CSWM Board.

Advisory comments:

- M. Tatchell – Tahsis Free Store is staffed, in that Village staff clean and maintain it with no cost to taxpayers.
- D. Baar – There are some parallels between free stores and pet shelters.
- M. E. Walling – Setting these up as free-standing options would put them in direct competition with the many thrift stores operating in Cumberland, Courtenay, Comox and Campbell River. An option could be to set aside items and provide to not-for-profits.
- D. Baar – There is also to some degree competition with free and non-free online services (e.g. Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace). However, if the end goal is to increase re-use, it's all good as long as there is enough good stuff to go around.
- K. Lukinuk – Hornby has gone through growing pains developing free store that works and dealing with illegal dumping of garbage. Items now screened before accepting. Working with thrift store great idea, as long as they're willing to take on additional material.
    - Hornby is good model, but also exception to rule as entirely volunteer-based example.
    - Hornby free store is only open two hours for two days a week. Seven days a week doesn't seem viable.
- R. Rowe - My hunch on the free/share stores would be that primarily low-value items would be dropped off. With the non-profit or charitable organizations that exist, or with online options like marketplace or Facebook groups, most higher value items would typically be disposed/sold/given away there first.
- J. Best – Even with 50+ thrift stores/existing options in the region, combined with online options like Facebook Marketplace, there is still an egregious amount of reusable material landfilled daily in the region. Opportunities should definitely be explored to partner with thrift stores to divert material that otherwise would have been thrown away at the landfill, but it's not realistic to expect them to staff it. Material should be delivered to them on a regular basis from landfill-based free stores, assuming they want it. If they don't, then it wasn't taking material from them in the first place.

Next Steps & Wrap-Up

S. Willie gave an overview of next steps for the SWMP. Requested that the committee review the engagement plan and draft memos and then provide staff with feedback. Parking lot includes west coast communities and multi-family. Shared example of recycling depot in New Zealand.

Advisory comments:

- M. Tatchell – West coast communities missing in analysis, so should include information for SWMP.

Co-Chair W. Cole-Hamilton thanked the committee for their input and time, and adjourned the meeting.

GENERAL:
The next Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee is scheduled for April 4, 2024, at 1:00 pm.

TERMINATION:
The meeting terminated at 4:03 pm.

Recorded by:	Certified correct:
M. Briggs	***S. Willie***
Michael Briggs Branch Assistant – Engineering Services	Sarah Willie Manager of Solid Waste Planning and Policy Development